

THE CORRESPONDENT.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

CHRISTIAN IDEAS OF THE DEITY, MISSIONS, &c.

Mr. Editor—According to Christianity it was not possible for the Supreme Being to become reconciled to man—to remove the *infinite* hatred which he entertained against him, without making some sort of sacrifice; and, that this recompense might be complete, he made the greatest possible sacrifice. He had an integral part of himself crucified! Now, by what mode of intellectual proceeding could this self destruction work a reconciliation with criminals, or expiate their offences? Is it conceivable, that if my neighbor injures me, beyond his ability to make amends, the self destruction of one of my limbs, though possessing the power of reproduction, will enable me to pardon him? Can farther infliction of pain remove pain already inflicted? If the feelings of God, of which the Christians speak as of human feelings, were hurt by the vices of man, think ye, who have strength to think impartially, were it not in his power to apply a better and more exemplary restorative, than unnecessary suicide? Or, if he were anxious for the redemption of mankind, do you believe that eternal wisdom would have been guilty of violating its own laws when it could have proceeded in its plans with consistency and to the same effect? Those who hold to such a dogma, virtually charge the Deity with having met with difficulties, which he could not surmount, without an abandonment of the *eternal* order of Nature. They charge him with the incomprehensible absurdity of *altering* his own *unchangeable* laws, of being obliged to resort to the performance of an impossibility—in other words, of working a miracle! If the sins of mankind were so infinitely enormous, as to require nothing short of the sacrifice of a God for their remission, how is it that the fact is so deficient in proof as to admit of a doubt? and how comes it, that it is not promulgated to every man upon the globe, and that three fourths or more of the inhabitants of the earth are ignorant of this important scheme, which condemns them to eternal misery for not believing, or entitles them to endless felicity for giving credence to its doctrines? Such a circumstance should not only be circulated through the world, but should come home to the mind of every individual of the human family, accompanied with physical and satisfactory evidence. Like the motion of bodies, and the light of the sun, it should preclude doubt and defy contradiction; for, if Christians are correct in their assertions, it is a question of infinite magnitude to man, and, as such, ought to supersede every other consideration, and constitute the greatest business of his life. But what is the fact? Look abroad into the world. Cast your

imaginings towards India or Arabia ; those dark abodes which have never been illumined by the blaze of Christian faggots—through whose undisturbed wretchedness, the glorious promises and threatenings of the gospel, the prayers and anathemas of its ministers, the cavils of its professors, have never resounded. Why are they suffered to grope their passage to hell without some friendly God to die for them ? Or, if the atoning sacrifice for these *unconscious* sinners has already been made, why, in the name of justice, have they not been advertised thereof ? since to be saved they must first *believe* ; and to believe, they must first be informed.

But we are told, that the gospel is rapidly spreading through these heathen regions ! Yes ! and it is in this way, that the Christian scheme, founded on the weakness, the ignorance, and the misfortunes of man, has been propagated and preserved. Driven from the haunts of science, it seeks refuge among barbarians ; or, suffered to remain amid the arts, witness degenerate Rome, how soon, alas ! they sink under accumulated persecutions, and crimes, and ceremonies repugnant to reason. From England, where Christianity is but a state engine, turn your eyes to the happy Chinese, who, while he bows before the visible God of his own formation, laughs at the absurdity of an imaginary tripartite Deity ; one of whose mysterious sections undertook, in the shape of humanity, to *destroy itself*, in order to appease the aggregate vengeance, which, as a triple body, it owed to offending man ! He was not educated in the bloody doctrine of vicarious atonements. The sacrifice would appear to him more rational, had it consisted rather of *rice* and *milk*, than the *flesh* and *blood* of an *innocent God* !

To an Israelite, who had been instructed in the propitiatory virtues of the blood of goats and bullocks, the idea of a more extensive sacrifice might be natural enough. But, never having been taught that his Pagod delighted in bloody offering, how must his contempt be excited at the idea of a murdered deity ? To him, as to every man divested of Christian prejudice, the necessity which drew the Creator of the universe down upon this *atom* of his works, to suffer the death of a felon, is not discernable. Tell him, that having sinned against an infinite being, nothing short of infinite punishment could satisfy infinite justice ; he will ask why the punishment is not inflicted upon the offender ? Christians answer and say, that *infinite mercy*, on account of the inadequacy of man to atone for his crime, contrived to take the forfeiture upon itself in the execution of the only Son of God ! He will then inquire, why man was so created as to be able to commit sins which it was impossible for him to repair ; since, if God could foresee the consequence of man's transgression, he foresaw the sacrifice of his only begotten son ; and, consequently, created man with the power of forcing, by his wickedness, a God to become "obedient to the death of the cross ?" Priestly sophistry may fabricate a reply, but a man of common sense cannot. Is it to be supposed that such a dogma will be received among the untaught infidels, as they are called, without scrutiny ? a dogma so abhorrent to the very nature of things, and so naturally hostile to all their conceptions of right and wrong ? Wherever it has obtained credence, however, with other

mysteries of this religion, it has been found politic to keep the untutored in perpetual ignorance with respect to all the arts of civilization and the discoveries of philosophy, for a love of consistency is inherent in the human mind. While the Bible, therefore, teaches principles and conduct in utter contravention of the evidence of human reason, and the affections most natural to man, it cannot be expected, that a savage, or even a civilized man, in his right mind, will reject every thing dear and valuable, to follow a phantasm not of his own invention; that he will *hate* his friends and relations, in order that he *might be able* to love Jesus with all his might; that he will love and cherish those who are ready to pluck out his vitals, that he may serve God more thoroughly!! or, that he will believe in miracles, when it is so easily demonstrable, that the laws of Nature are immutable and cannot be for a moment suspended.

If, then, the missionaries are anxious for the preservation of their tragical scheme, they must be cautious how they introduce history, for that will testify against their religion; how they teach geography, for that will belie their *holy book*; how they touch upon astronomy, for the system of Nature is at war with the system of impostors. So certain as the sciences, aided by the art of printing, are diffused, so certain will their progress, slow though sure, undermine this air built fabric, and prostrate its heterogeneous ruins in the dust.

But the Christian priests feel solicitous to provide a habitation for their favorite, in case it shall be expelled from enlightened society. Feeling their influence to be less commanding, they, as might be expected, are desirous to plant the cross in the wilds of Africa and Asia, that when civilized man will no longer suffer imposition, they may lord it over the untutored and the timid, ignorance and fear being the props of this religion! Success may for a time attend the labors of this *pious* fraternity, but the gradual developement of the mental energies of man will follow in the natural order of things; and when even the Hottentot, or the Tartar, shall have become sufficiently enlightened to preserve social order without the restraints of superstition, he will exchange bigotry for liberty; his mind, expanded, will view, in their native purity, the phenomena of Nature, and resign, with just indignation, the stupid schemes of infatuated impostors.

R. P.

HISTORY OF SAMUEL.

Continued from page 102.

Several years, perhaps eight or ten, were passed in the wars of Saul, without any mention of Samuel. Without doubt the successes and popularity of the king affected the prophet. At last he reappears on the scene; he seeks an occasion favorable to his views; he finds Saul; he opens by recalling to his mind that he consecrated him king. This was to induce obedience, through a sentiment of gratitude, to what he was going to say. "Behold," he observes, "what that God now ordains who formerly ordered me to consecrate you. I recollect what the people of Amalek did against my people at the coming up from Egypt." [It was 400 years before; Amalek had opposed the passage of the He-

brews and had slain many.] "Go now, strike Amalek; destroy all that belongs to them; spare nothing; you must slay men, women, children, oxen, sheep, goats," &c. Who is not chilled at such a command! To make God order the extermination of a nation because of a quarrel 400 years before, in which the Hebrews were the aggressors, for they wished to force a passage through the territory of Amalek. But what was the object of Samuel? He had a design in view, and an occasion was wanted to execute it. Some recent rapine of the Bedouin [Arabs] Amalekites had aggravated the Jewish people: Samuel saw in it a popular cause for war, and seized it.

Saul formed an army. The Hebrew text says 10,000 men of Judah, and 200,000 foot soldiers of the other tribes. The Greek says, 400,000 men of one, and 30,000 of the other. The Alexandrian manuscript says only 10,000 of each, which is the most probable. Why these contradictions? Why these absurdities? for, it is absurd to collect 200,000 men to take by surprise a small tribe of Bedouins. Saul departs and surprises the Amalekites in the desert; he kills all those who fall into his hands, takes their king alive, guards him together with the beasts and other booty. Returning triumphant to Mount Carmel, he descends to the valley, where there is an altar, and prepares, says the text, to offer a sacrifice to God of the best among the spoil, according to the rites of the Greeks and Romans. Samuel arrives; but, says the historian, God had spoken to the Seer (during the night) and had said, "I repent of having made Saul king, for he has turned from me and does not obey my orders." This, it is said, frightened Samuel, who cried to the Lord all night. Here, again, is a vision, a conference, a repentance from God! Could our negroes and savages hear such fables without laughing? The Jews believe all; they do not ask any proof of Samuel; he, however, is the only evidence; he only could have written such details. He is here author, actor, judge, and party. Who would be a Jew to believe upon his word.

Samuel arrives, and advances to Saul: "What means," says he, "this noise of cattle that I hear?" Saul answers, "the people have spared the best of the effects of Amalek to offer to the Lord our God; we have destroyed the rest." "Allow me, (replies Samuel,) to relate what God said to me last night." "Speak," says Saul. "When you was little in your own eyes, (says the Lord) did not I make you king of Israel, and now have I not sent you against Amalek directing you to exterminate him; why have you not fulfilled my commandment? why have you sinned and kept the spoils?" "I have obeyed, (replied Saul); I marched, I destroyed Amalek, and brought away the king alive, but the people have kept back these spoils and these victims of beasts, to offer on the altar of God at Gulgala." Samuel answers, "Does God demand these offerings and victims, rather than obedience to his orders? You endeavor to ascertain good fortune by a victim, by inspecting the fat of rams; but know that the sin of divination is rebellion, a falsehood, an idolatry; but since you reject the command of God he rejects your kingdom."

Saul, feeble and superstitious, confesses himself culpable; he supplicates the ambassador of God, to pray for the removal of his sin; the priest rejects his prayer, reiterates his deposition, and turns to leave him.

Saul seizes the skirt of his coat or cloak to retain him ; the priest, implacable, makes an effort, by which the part is torn. "God (he repeats) has torn from you the kingdom of Israel and has delivered it to a better : he has so decreed : is he man to repent ?" Saul insists ; "I have sinned, do not dishonor me before my people and before their chiefs ; return to me and I will humble myself before *your God* ;"* and Samuel returned, and Saul humbled himself before Jehovah. Samuel then said, "Bring me Agag, king of Amalek ;" and Agag being come, Samuel said to him, "What you have done to the children of our mothers, that shall be done to yours ;" and Samuel cut him in pieces, [it seems with an axe.] Having performed this exploit, Samuel returned to Ramatah, and during his life did not visit Saul.

What a barbarous scene ! horrible, it must be confessed ; but, I know some more horrible still pass before eyes in our day. Suppose that Samuel had brought Agag to Ramatah ; that there he had confined him in a dungeon, at the bottom of a cistern ; that he had come every day with an attendant to make him undergo various tortures, to burn his feet, his hands, to stretch him upon a wooden horse, to dislocate him, &c. &c. ; all this with honied terms, saying, that it was all for his good ; would not the lot of the victim have been a thousand times more dreadful ? Ah ! much better the open cruelty of the Hebrew priest, compared with the charity of the priests and monks which bless Rome ! Yet, the European governments authorize and suffer such abominations ! But, did Samuel commit such an act without motive, without a projected object ? That would not be in conformity to his deep and calculating character : we will examine these motives.

For ten or twelve years, Saul, by his victories, did not cease to flourish and strengthen his credit in the minds of all the nation. Samuel, finding himself eclipsed, took occasion to flatter the vindictive passion of the Hebrews against the Amalekites. The victory of Saul and taking king Agag, in disobedience to the command of God, who had ordered the extermination of the Amalekites, furnished Samuel with a pretence for striking the audacious blow of anointing a substitute, to rival Saul. He thought it necessary to strike terror into their minds by a preliminary, imposing step, which would make Saul dread the falling upon him of some new celestial anathema. It is certain, that this manœuvre of Samuel succeeded, since Saul did not dare to use any act of violence against him.

In considering the action of Samuel, in a general point of view, political and moral, it presents an astonishing union of pride, audacity, cruelty, and hypocrisy : a little orphan upstart, to decree, from his caprice, the extermination of a whole nation, even to the last living being ! to insult, to abuse a king covered with laurels, become legitimate by his victories, and by the assent of the nation, grateful for the peace and respect which he had procured for them ! a priest to trouble this whole nation by a change of the prince, by the intrusion of a new elect of his choice. Here is found the first germ of that political division of the Hebrews, which, suppressed under David and Solomon, broke out under the imprudent

* These words seem remarkable : there was, then, among the Hebrews other acknowledged Gods, who lived on an equality with Jehovah.

Rheoboam, and prepared the fall of the nation by rending it into two kingdoms, that of Israel and that of Judah.

We see here the fruits of that divine or visionary power, imprudently allowed by a people, stupified by superstition, to a king otherwise worthy of esteem, but feeble minded. We see an imposter who dared to call himself the sent of God, the representative of God, finally God himself, (for such is the transition of ideas which will not fail to occur when the first is tolerated,) turning all this to his profit. The plain historian achieves, without knowing it, the tracing of the portrait and character of Samuel, in saying, "Samuel did not see Saul any more; but lamented his misfortune that God had rejected him." Some time after, God appears to the holy prophet and says to him, "Why do you continue to lament for Saul? Cease to afflict yourself; it is necessary to consecrate another."

Thus Samuel, by his nocturnal cries, acquired the reputation of lamenting the king whom he destroyed. Have Spain and Italy, in the science of their *holy offices*, produced an inquisition more tender or more wicked? On reflection, Samuel answers his God, "If Saul knows that I have consecrated another, he will kill me." Then the God Jehovah explains to him how, by feigning a sacrifice at the house of one named Isai, (Jesse,) in the village of Bethelern, and how, from the eight male children of that man, he would point out to him the one chosen for the new king. Samuel then fills a small horn with oil, and went to the village of Bethlehem: the villagers, surprised and uneasy, go out to him and say to him, "Peace be with you;" and he replies, "Peace, (sheloum,) I am come to sacrifice; sanctify yourselves, you shall come with me to eat the victim;" and he sanctified Isai and his children, and called them to the repast of the victim; and as they entered, seeing Eliab, the eldest, a handsome man, he says, "Surely this is the anointed of the Lord;" but the Lord whispered to him "No, that is not him: man judges by the appearance, I judge by the heart."

Samuel then made the seven sons of Isai pass by him, and said to him, "God has not made a choice; have you no other children?" Isai answered, there is still a younger one who watches the sheep: Send for him, says Samuel, for we will not sit down to table without him. They went and brought him. He was a young man, ruddy, and of a good and handsome countenance; and God says to Samuel, "Anoint *him*; that is he;" and Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him, aside from his brethren; and from that moment the spirit of God prospered David; and Samuel returned to Ramah to his house. The spirit of God left Saul, and an evil spirit, sent from God, troubled the king; and his servants proposed to him to send for a man, skilful, to play on the lyre: he agrees; and one of them observed, "I have seen the son of Isai, of Bethlehem, who knows how to play; he is a valiant man, a man of war, prudent in his discourse, and of good person; God is with him: and Saul sent to Isai to demand David; and Isai took a bottle of wine and a young goat, which he put upon an ass, and sent David with the present to Saul. Saul, having seen him, took a liking to him and made him armor bearer, and when the spirit of God seized Saul, David took his lyre, and Saul breathed and was well; and the evil spirit left him."

To be continued.

PRAYING MACHINE.

Mr. Editor—This machine is described by Timkowski, in his "Mission to China," as follows: "Kurde designates a chest with many angles which turns on an axis, and which is placed in the temples of Boudha. These chests are a sort of prayer books for those who cannot read; the sides are covered with prayers, both in the Tibetan and Mongol languages, in large gold letters; they also put into the chest, prayers in both languages, that the worshippers coming to the temple, kneeling before the Kurde, and repeating their 'om ma ni bat me com,' may turn it round as long as their zeal prompts them, which is considered to be as efficacious as if they repeated the prayers themselves;" and there can be no doubt but it is; and if Christians would adopt this machine, it would save them a vast deal of money, which they now pay to their priests to pray for them. I consider this invention of far greater importance than many that have obtained patents in this country.

Mr. Timkowski thus describes the usual manner of burying the dead among the Mongols: "The dying devotee sends for a lama to secure the salvation of his soul and body; the priest, after having inquired the day and hour of the birth of the patient, the circumstances which accompanied it, and the events of his life, decides, according to the sacred books and laws of astrology, whether the body shall be burnt, or committed to the water; if it shall be exposed on a lofty stage, or covered with stones, with or without the clothes, and which of his effects are to be added as offerings." Offerings, I believe, are never forgotten by priests of any country or denomination; but, those that make them are promised repayment a hundred fold in the world to come.

The astrological decision in respect to the disposition of the bodies of these stupid people, is undoubtedly as rational as that made in regard to their souls by the Christian clergy; which, according to them, will be tormented for *ever and ever*, for lack of that knowledge of the Saviour, which it is in the power of the Almighty, without any effort, to communicate in a moment, but which he is represented, by the priests, as arbitrarily withholding.

SCRUTATOR.

THE ANTIDOTE PINE LAND "MIRACLE" VANISHED INTO SMOKE!

Mr. Editor—I perceive, by the last Antidote you sent me, that the modern magi of our country have called upon the "sages" of the Correspondent, to explain away another wonderful, "miraculous" production of Nature, to wit:

"That where a forest of one kind of trees has been cut down, and where nought but this kind of trees was ever before known to grow, an entire different species has shortly sprung up. Cut down the pine forests between Albany and Schenectady, and a forest of oak or hickory, or perhaps both, will spring up in its place; but, how is this new growth brought into existence? There is the question, which has puzzled, and continues to puzzle the philosophic world. Where have the seeds of the new growth been lying for ages, while the land has been covered with

pinus? Neither Columella, nor Varro, nor Aristotle, nor Bacon, nor Aldrovandus, nor Buffon, nor Curvier, in short, no philosopher, ancient or modern, has been able to explain this phenomenon," &c.

Now, notwithstanding that I am not old enough for a "sage," nor wise enough for a "philosopher," but only a humble cornplanter in Virginia; yet, I think that I can trace this "phenomenon" or "miraculous" production, to as simple an operation of Nature, as I have the "burning bush" and "blossomed rod" of Moses!

In the first place, every planter or farmer knows, that when a tract of land is overrun with blackberry bushes, they will, after some years, so exhaust or disgust the soil, that they will die, and produce no more blackberries or bushes, spontaneously, for some years.

The wild raspberry bushes in this country are in the same predicament; they may be found flourishing in thickets for some years; but after a certain time they exhaust the land, so that they cannot thrive in the same land very long. Who plants this, "where it is certain no human hand ever planted it" before? Why, the wind, as well as the birds and beasts.

By the same operations, does Nature produce a forest of oak or hickory, instead of the pine, which occupied the same ground before: for, after the pine is cut off, the first tempest or whirlwind that occurs begins to scatter the acorns and nuts from the nearest trees of that description; and, as the soil has been exhausted by the pine and become uncongenial to its future vegetation, the oak and hickory offer the necessary change, and prosper; and although tempests and whirlwinds may be the chief agents employed by God in scattering the seed over the earth, yet much of it is done by birds and beasts.

For instance, we have annually myriads of pigeons, who live on acorns, and who frequently roost at a great distance from the places where they feed. Now, if the modern magi can find out how many acorns a pigeon generally takes into his crop, and how many are killed annually in their flight through the Schenectady pine lands, by the hawks by day and the owls by night, they can easily ascertain how many of these trees have been planted by the pigeons! And, if the magi can discover how many acorns and small hickory nuts have dropped from the trees and lodged in the wool of thousands of sheep, &c., while feeding around these trees, and afterwards fell out, while the sheep wandered or laid down upon the pine lands—then, I fancy the magi will find but little cause left, to "puzzle" either the "sage" or the "philosopher!"

No land, however rich, can produce more than one good crop of *flax* in five or six years, though the same ground will still produce fine crops of grain or vegetables. As to the "miraculous" production of "clover and vetches," I think the magi will be convinced, by this time, that the winds alone are amply sufficient to disperse those seeds where the hand of man never planted them.

If the magi will make a tour to this country, I can show them greater wonders than pine lands producing oak and hickory trees. For, I can show them oak trees, bearing pines, beeches, sycamores, &c., and thus, of course, have, also, our "trees growing where they never grew before," "and where it is certain no human hand ever planted it." But, how do you suppose these "miracles" are performed in our country? Why, some,

ancient trees of the forest have a hollow space in the crotch, which retains some water after the rains, and, by the accumulation of dust and rotten leaves, will, in time, have two or three inches of vegetable mould, on which the seed from other kinds of trees are sometimes blown by the winds, and frequently take root and vegetate, at various heights from the ground. However, they never grow to any thing large, and as they were sown by the wind, so they are blown down by the same agent, in a few years after.

C. SHULTZ, Virginia.

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LECTURES DELIVERED AT THE FREE PRESS ASSOCIATION.

On the Inconsistencies, Absurdities, and Contradictions of the Bible.

By the Secretary.

LECTURE SIXTH.

It is no less remarkable than true, that although all the religions of the earth are decidedly opposed to, and subversive of each other, and that their votaries consign one another to everlasting misery on account of this difference of opinion, they all concur in attributing to Deity the worst passions and weakness of the human heart. They depict him as a peevish old man—a ferocious and vindictive tyrant—a stupid, impotent, and wrathful demon, who is guided by no other rule, who has no standard of action, but that of caprice. In no system do these abhorrent traits of character appear more prominent, than in the Bible account of the fall of man. There, we are told, that after Adam and Eve eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, “they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”

According to this passage, the God of the Jews was altogether destitute of foreknowledge. He was so little acquainted with the conduct and actions of the beings he had just made, and so incapable of appreciating their principles and motives, that he found it necessary to leave his throne in the heavens, and to descend on that spot of the earth where the first man and woman were placed, before he could ascertain what they were about. Even then, so short sighted was Jehovah, that he could not discover the individuals he was in search of, until he had called to them to know where they had concealed themselves: “And the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, where art thou? and he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” What contemptible ideas does this story give us of the Almighty being, who is believed to have created the universe! Notwithstanding his omnipotence, he was not only totally ignorant of what was going on, but he had to take a walk in the garden, in the cool of the day, in order to refresh himself previous to making the necessary inquiries. At last, after tracing the man and woman to their hiding place, it was still requisite to interrogate the fugitives as to the cause of

their concealment, and to trace the story, from one end to another, up to its original source, before he could understand the business, or discover the wicked scheme, which had so completely defeated all his beneficent intentions, and diffused sin and misery through the whole fabric of his works. "And he said, who told thee that thou wast naked? hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat? And the man said, the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, what is it that thou hast done? And the woman said, the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

After giving us this account of a dialogue, in which God is represented as a being possessing no penetration, and who was compelled to interrogate the workmanship of his own hands, in order to get at the truth, the writer proceeds to tell us what effect the disclosure had on this deity. First, he turns to the serpent, and says, "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field: upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and has eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it—cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground, for out of it thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

It is impossible to reflect on this narrative without perceiving, that it represents God as one of the most wrathful and choleric beings that can be supposed to exist. The priests of Christianity tell us, that the Deity is "long suffering and *slow to wrath*;" that he would rather sinners should live than die, in order to give them time for repentance. But here, in this very Bible, which, they also say, God inspired, he is represented as a passionate, furious despot, who, without allowing himself a moment for consideration, curses man, woman, animals, the earth and all its productions, for an offence which could not be avoided, because he, the Almighty, had so arranged matters that it must be committed. Even could this arrangement have been affected by any of the creatures he had made, still the offence was of too trivial a nature to excite anger in the bosom of any one pretending to rationality; yet, for this venal transgression, the Deity inverts, almost in a moment, and disorders the beautiful fabric, which he had only a few hours before pronounced superlatively excellent. Before the sun had set for the first time, the whole frame of Nature, which he had just formed and embellished, was condemned to ruin and confusion. In the morning, God said all things were good: in the evening, all things were accursed! How fleeting and inconstant was the glory of the things created by that unchangeable being to whom the formation of the world is ascribed. A work that was

six days in elaborating, and bringing to perfection, and that by an omnipotent architect, was ruined in a few hours, because this architect had not the judgment to perceive, that a moment's cool reflection would have enabled him to remedy the mischief, if any mischief had actually been done.

But, so far from what is called the disobedience of our first parents being mischievous, it appears to me that its effects were beneficial; for, what was the transgression? Why, it was eating the fruit of a tree which possessed the extraordinary virtue of conferring a knowledge of good and evil on all who partook of it. Although we are assured, that God made man perfect, it is clear that knowledge was not included in this perfection; for man was at first incapable of distinguishing good from evil. How ridiculous, then, was it to tell him that it would be *evil* to violate a law, and *good* to observe it, when, as yet, he had no idea of good or evil; and how capricious, unjust, and cruel was it to curse the serpent, the man, and the woman, for not knowing what God had purposely concealed from them. In this conduct it is easy to discover the model by which the priesthood form their notions of knowledge. Jehovah punishes mankind for wishing to know good and evil: the priests denounce all free inquiry. God claims the exclusive right of deciding what constitutes obedience and disobedience: the priests arrogate the prerogative of teaching mankind the duties they owe to the same deity. The clergy, in fact, pretend to be the only interpreters of the will of heaven, and the only guardians of knowledge on this earth. Afraid that the people should become too well informed, they prescribe to them a certain course of reading, from which, if they deviate, they are lost. Who does not perceive the inconsistency of this conduct? If the present system of religion be the best possible, the better it is understood; and the more the people in general are qualified to appreciate its merits, the better for the system itself. But it has ever been the policy of tyranny, whether civil or religious, to keep the mass of the people in profound ignorance. Hence it is, that among some Christians the free use of that book which is said to contain a revelation of the divine will is prohibited; and even where it is permitted to be read, no one dare to understand it contrary to the interpretations of the church. This effectually puts an end to all doubt, by prohibiting all inquiry. In this, it must be acknowledged, the priesthood act with consummate policy, as they are aware that if mankind were to exercise their own judgments in perusing the Bible, this would prove as fatal to their authority as all the liberal writings that have ever been published. The Italians have a proverb, which says, that among the blind, the one eyed is a king; and our clergy are of opinion, not, perhaps, without reason, that their own pretensions to superior attainments and refinement, shine all the better for being contrasted with the ignorance of the great mass of the population.

It is to the extravagant representations given of Deity in the Bible, that we are also to trace all those wrathful and malignant feelings which govern the mass of mankind. They are told to imitate a being who gets into a passion, and pronounces curses on his own works, without allowing himself time for reflection. If the God we are enjoined to worship indulges in these fits, and in these outrages towards the human species, why should not his adorers imitate him, and, instead of showing kind-

ness and forbearance to those who may have displeased them, curse and swear at them, and do them all the injury in their power. If we are to take Jehovah as an example, and to obtain heaven only by resembling him, I do not see how we can do otherwise than call down his vengeance on our fellow men, and render them as miserable as possible, when they do not exactly conform to our views, or refuse to comply with our capricious wishes. Why is it that the elder children of a family beat and abuse the younger, or, when they have none of their own species on whom they can vent their spleen, maltreat domestic animals, or violently attack the tables, chairs, or any thing within their reach? It is because their parents have set them the example, by their severities, in imitation of those chastisements, which their priests tell them are inflicted by their heavenly father, who is perpetually angry with his children. Religion, in fact, has been the cause of all the cruelty and oppression that has been committed on the earth. By holding up a sanguinary and implacable deity as an object of adoration, mankind become alike sanguinary and relentless. By exhibiting him as a being who delights in tormenting his creatures, in sporting with their calamities, and in being gratified with the shedding of blood, his worshippers become, what we every where find them to be, insensible to the wants and sufferings of their fellow men, intolerant and rapacious; and, where they are not restrained by public opinion, or by the law, they are prepared to shed the blood of all who maintain that God is a beneficent being, and that the evil which exists in the world originates in their own corrupt institutions.

When the writer of Genesis makes Jehovah curse the serpent because it enticed Eve, he evidently intended to excite disgust at the low condition in which it is said to have been reduced, in order that all future generations might avoid an animal so dangerous. But do the people of any country show this disgust: or is there any thing in a serpent basking in the sun, or moving gently along the surface of the earth, to cause alarm, or even dislike? For my part, I never see a serpent in either of these positions but what I admire it for its beautiful skin and motions: And were it not for the effects of education, I should feel disposed to take hold of the animal rather than to shun it. Nor is it true that serpents are doomed to crawl for ever on their bellies, and to eat the dust; for they may be frequently seen erect, climbing trees, and devouring frogs and other reptiles. I should, indeed, be disposed to deny the fact altogether, that serpents ever sought nourishment in the dust of the earth.

It is well ascertained, that so far from people entertaining a natural dread of, or even dislike to, serpents, the Hivites adore them. Aristotle speaks of a serpent that was held sacred in Thessaly. Conner, in his history of Poland says, that the Lithuanians employ serpents as penates. Jackson, in his account of Morocco, states, that there is scarcely a family there without a serpent; and Bruce informs us, that at the source of the Nile, the inhabitants pray to serpents, because they teach the coming of good and evil. They also domesticate them, as the Romans did the sacred chickens, for the purpose of prophecy. But the homage paid to serpents was not confined to nations unacquainted with the Christian religion. During the last century, the custom of carrying serpents in the religious processions, which commenced about the year 500 of our pres-

sent era, was common in France. Every church had its serpent or dragon. At first, these allegorical representations were intended to exhibit the triumph of the new religion over paganism. But the visible part of the worship soon became the most important part of that religion in the estimation of the multitude, who are most attentive to what affects their senses. Hence the transition from astonishment and terror, to that of respect for its supernatural powers, which imagination and credulity attributed to the dragon or serpent. At Poitiers, in France, it was piously surnamed "the good *Saint Vermin*;" fervent prayers were addressed to him, chaplets were eagerly brought to him to touch, and all the observances which the superstitious introduce into their worship, were practised on the days devoted to his saint serpentship. In the year 1771 this species of worship was in full vigor in all the catholic churches of the Netherlands; and some remains of it may be still observed in Europe, in the emblematical figures of St. George and St. Michael, in many pictures with which the walls of the churches are decorated. These facts completely destroy the idle tale about enmity having been placed between the seed or offspring of the woman and that of the serpent; and as to the *biting* the heel, this is nothing more than what was to be expected of any reptile when it felt its head to be bruised. In some countries, the empirics imagine that the bite of a serpent is cured by *bruising the head*. Burrow says that this is considered senative among the inhabitants of China, and among the Hottentots and Javanese. It will also be observed, that the book of Genesis assigns no motive for the serpent tempting Eve. On the contrary, it appears that what the animal told her was the *truth*, without disguise or exaggeration. How unjust then, to punish an act, in which there was no moral turpitude, and to call that gratuitous villany, by which the knowledge of good and evil was introduced into the world.

To be continued. 187.

Mr. Owen's Communities.—It appears by late Glasgow papers that Mr. Owen, on his way to New Lanark, in Scotland, paid a visit to the Orbiston Cooperative Society, which was established about 18 months ago, and that he found it in a most flourishing condition. It is composed of nearly 300 individuals; each, on an average, lives upon 2s. 6d. sterling per week, though 10s. is allotted to each; the surplus goes to the common stock. The building, in erecting, cost about £13,000; the land £20,000; and £4,000 additional for improvements. The amount of land 330 acres—40 acres of which are of wheat—35 acres oats—9 acres turnips. They have 12 cows, and a considerable piggery, containing about 30 pigs. They have also five or six horses. Ten hours are allotted for each to labor. During the whole existence of this institution, only two men had been expelled for misconduct. No punishments are inflicted on any, young or old. Mr. Owen, before leaving for Glasgow, read to them the particulars of his American journey—the purport of which was, that he had established 9 or 10 institutions of the same kind in America, from which he augured the happiest result. He requested that they should put no faith in the statements of the public prints of the day, and encouraged them to persevere as they had hitherto done.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Marriages at Gretna Green.—Gretna Green is a small parish, situated immediately on the north side of the small river Sark, which forms the boundary between Scotland and England, and is the nearest and most easily accessible point in Scotland to those from the sister kingdom. To this Gretna owes its present greatness! Not Gretna, but a small village in the immediate neighborhood, unknown to fame, called Springfield, is the place where all the marriages are made; and it is calculated that about 365 (one a day) take place every year. Of the two priests now existing, one is named *Lang* alias "the bishop," the other, *Elliott*. The form of marriage at Gretna is very brief and simple: the parson (bishop or blacksmith) asks the parties whence they come, and what parish they belong to, for the purpose of being entered in the register. They are asked if they be willing to receive each other for better, for worse, &c. This being ascertained, and a wedding ring passed between them, they are declared to be married persons. The fees paid to the parson are said to be sometimes very handsome, so much as a hundred pounds being occasionally paid him for his five minutes' work—high wages for a common laborer to receive, by merely putting on a black coat! On such occasions, house rents are equally extravagant, a couple of guineas being unblushingly asked for the use of a private room for the space of five minutes after the ceremony. Of those who admire English law as the perfection of human reason we would ask—if it be for the public interest to prevent clandestine marriages on the one side of the Tweed, is it not equally so on the other? On the English side of the Tweed, they will not allow dissenters to escape the church ceremony, although it be contrary to their conscience to submit to it; but if they choose to step over to the other side, the same persons may marry without any ceremony at all. Here the marriage must be solemnized by a regular clergyman of the church; there it may be done by a tinker. This system is so remote from reason, that it resembles more the laws attributed to witchcraft.

Fable of a Guebre Prophet.—Carried by an angel, says the fable, to a spot whence he beheld the place of torment of the wicked, and informed by the angel of the various reasons for the various conditions in which he saw the several sufferers, his attention was at length particularly caught by the situation of a man whose whole naked body was surrounded by raging flames, with the single exception of his left foot! "And what," said the prophet to the angel, "what, my lord," is the cause of that particular exception?" "The man whom thou beholdest," returned the angel "was, in his lifetime, a wicked king. His oppression of his subjects was grievous, and thou seest how he suffereth for his guilt! But, one day, that miserable tyrant (tyrant though he was) walked near to a sheep cote, where it chanced that he saw a lamb tethered to a stake, and was hungering after the remainder of a parcel of hay which had been placed near it, but of which it had already consumed all that was within its reach. The wicked prince feeling, upon that occasion, one emotion of pity, stretched

out his left foot, and pushed the hay within reach of the lamb! Thou perceivest, then, O prophet! how surely thy God remembereth every deed of mercy among all the sons of men; how he loveth all his creatures; and how he beareth in mind every act of love which is performed for them! A single act of mercy, bestowed upon a hungry lamb, has saved from the flames of hell the left foot even of a wicked tyrant!"

Tolling of Bells.—There are dying as well as dead people in the world, and sick people who will die if they are not encouraged. What must be the effect of this mortal note unceasingly reiterated in their ears? Who would set a whining fellow at a sick man's door, to repeat to him all day long, "Your neighbor's dead—your neighbor's dead?" But you say, "It is to remind the hearty, and not the sick, that we sound; and the few must give way to the many." Good! it delights me to hear you say so; but in this particular instance allow me to think you are mistaken. I differ from a belfrey with hesitation. Triple bob majors are things before which it becomes a philosophic inquirer to be modest. But have we not memoranda enough to this good end? Have we not coughs, colds, fevers, plethoras, deaths of all sorts occurring round about us, old faces, churchyards, accidents infinite, books, muskets, wars, apothecaries, kings? Is not the whole nation swallowed up in grief when a great statesman dies? Does not even a rich old lady die now and then? You remind the sick and the dying too forcibly: but you are much mistaken if you think the healthy regard your importunity of advice in any other light than that of a considerable nuisance. It would be useful to know how many deaths are hastened by a bell; at least, how many recoveries are retarded. There are sensitive persons, not otherwise in ill health, who find it difficult to hear the sound without tears. What must they feel on a sick bed!

A Pious Broker.—A stock broker who was recently announced as a defaulter, and who belonged to "good society," is said to have been mainly indebted for the great increase of his connexions to the following expedient. He became a regular attendant on Sundays at a church where the duty was performed by one of the most popular preachers of the day, where he showed remarkable assiduity in presenting books of the hymns, and in pointing out the particular one performed, to those rich elderly ladies who happened to be near him. In all these books, of which he had taken due care to provide himself with a sufficient quantity, were written his name, profession, and the situation of his office. Of course, when any of these wealthy dowagers found occasion either to buy or to sell stock, the name of the polite Mr. —, who had been so attentive to them at church, was sure to occur to their recollection. So pious a gentleman must be of course trustworthy, and to him, therefore, the care of their transactions in the funds was confided. Many of his clients, we hear, have since found powerful reasons for repenting of the confidence thus placed.

Shameful Law.—The viscount de B—, (says Grimm, in his memoirs,) a young man of rank, was educated at the Royal Military School at Paris; he then entered into the service, his first years in which were distinguished by a series of knavery and meanness. The most atrocious of his misdeeds was that to which mademoiselle Camp fell a victim. The young viscount, when staying at Montauban, became intimate in the family of this unfortunate lady. He called himself a protestant, and under that character married mademoiselle Camp, according to the rites of the protestant church, that is to say, without the interference of the catholic priest: he had one child by her, a daughter. After having lived with her publicly, as his wife, for some years, at Montauban, during which he spent all her fortune—after having, in consequence of his irregularities and debts, been for some time imprisoned at Fort l'Eveque, he quitted his confinement to marry another woman at Paris, according to the established rites, treating his union with mademoiselle Camp only as an affair of concubinage. The atrocious code with regard to protestantism, established by Lewis XIV., at the instigation of the *devout* Maintenon, to the eternal shame of France, supported admirably the conduct of young B., which in other civilized countries would have led him to the gallies at least, if not to the scaffold. His marriage with mademoiselle Camp was declared null, by a decree of the new parliament; nay, this body not only also adjudged damages to a man who was never worth a penny, but, with a barbarity wholly unheard of, as if the poor young woman's case was not already hard enough, ordered that her child, a little girl, should be taken from her and educated in a convent. Such was the law of France in 1772. Is not such the law of Ireland in 1827?

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